

BOOK REVIEW

Insects and history, by J. L. Cloudsley-Thompson. 1976. St. Martin's Press, Inc., 175 Fifth Ave., N.Y., NY 10010. Hardbound, 242p., \$18.95.

A much better title of this book might have been *Insects, Disease and History*, since these are the topics covered in nine out of ten chapters. In the first three chapters Cloudsley-Thompson discusses (1) epidemic disease in the ancient world, (2) the plagues of early Greece and Rome, and (3) war and pestilence in olden times. These chapters are filled with dates, events, and often conjecture as to the probable diseases responsible for the pestilences described.

If the entomologist is bored with the early historical portion of the volume he or she would do well to continue reading since chapters 4 through 8 are a pleasure to read. In this portion of the book the author presents a wealth of information—including medical statistics—in a smooth, easy to read, manner. Topics covered in these chapters are (4) fleas and bubonic plague, (5) mosquitoes and malaria, (6) lice, mites and typhus, (7) flies, typhoid and dysentery, and (8) tsetse flies and trypanosomiasis: yellow fever, dengue and sand-fly fever. Students of medical entomology should find these chapters excellent supplementary reading. In writing this section the author has relied on many accounts taken from a delightful classic, *Rats, Lice and History*, by Hans Zinsser. In fact, anyone who has enjoyed reading the latter will most certainly enjoy reading this volume.

In the next chapter, (9) famine, hysteria and the dancing mania, Cloudsley-Thompson presents a brief historical account on scurvy, a very brief account on insect pests in North America, and a longer historical account on locust plagues. Also briefly covered are the bed-bug, assassin bug and tarantula (spider). The latter arthropod, *Lycosa tarantula*, was believed to cause the Dancing Mania in humans by its bite. In the last chapter (10), the author discusses the use of insects as human food, in the preparation of medicine, and in making dyes, shellac and silk. Several beetles are mentioned briefly.

In summary, *Insects and History* is, for the most part, an interesting, smoothly written account of insects, disease and history. The print is large and comfortable to the eyes. The author has included a good bibliography of more than 80 titles and there are 35 figures. Included among the figures are large, clear diagrams of insects, and maps showing the geographical distributions of insect-borne diseases. Only one typographical error was noted. On page 104, the scientific name under the diagram of the human body louse is misspelled. On page 105 the author uses a quotation of nine lines but fails to cite his source. Considering the over-all excellence of this volume these errors should be overlooked. It is highly recommended for entomologists, other biologists, and laymen.

—P.P.S.

BOOK NOTICE

Methods in plant ecology, by S. B. Chapman. 1977. Halsted Press, 605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10016. Paper, 536p., \$19.95. This is a replacement of the 1976 cloth edition.